

DYNAMIC Steward

living ▪ submitting ▪ abiding ▪ giving

July-September, 2011

The Spirit of Sacrifice

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**My All
in Response to
God's All**

DYNAMIC Steward



Exploring partnership with God

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inside ds

William Borden was an amazing individual. As heir to the Borden family fortune he was wealthy at a young age. For his high school graduation present he was given a trip around the world. From his travels, a new perspective began to grow inside him and change his outlook on life.

Deep inside a burden was born for the world's hurting people. Soon he wrote that he wanted to become a missionary. Friends ridiculed such an idea and said that he was "throwing himself away as a missionary" to which he recorded in the back of his Bible, "NO RESERVES."

Borden attended Yale and even as a freshman he made a difference on campus. His uniqueness was not built around his wealth but rather around his personal convictions of commitment. He echoed his personal mantra in another entry: "Say 'no' to self and 'yes' to Jesus every time." This spirit, which appeared to some as a sacrifice, was an inspiration to others. His freshman campus Bible study group grew from 150 to 1000 during his senior year—the enrollment at Yale at that time was 1300! So focused was he that despite high paying job offers, he wrote once again in his Bible: "NO RETREATS."

William Borden subsequently completed his graduate work at Princeton University and sailed for China. His great desire was to work with Muslims as a missionary, so he stopped in Egypt to study Arabic. While there, he contracted spinal meningitis. Within a month 25-year old William Borden was dead. His death made an impact around the world.

Nearly every American newspaper carried the story. We are left with the question: "Was this a waste of unusual talent?" We need to let Borden answer that for himself. Recorded in his Bible during the time of his final illness and written underneath "No reserves, No retreats" was, "NO REGRETS."

No reserves, no retreats and no regrets all speak volumes of a man on a mission and one who was not willing to be distracted from it by wealth, criticism or hardships.

The theme of this issue of the *Dynamic Steward* is the spirit of sacrifice. William Borden exemplified such a lifestyle although I doubt he saw it as a sacrifice. He is not alone. Neither the Bible nor history books record all who have made and all who make such a commitment, but that does not lessen the impact they have made and are making. For example, **Dick Duerksen** will introduce you to Stain Musungaila of Zambia. His journey will inspire you with what God can do with a heart led by His Spirit. **Jody Fransch**, in our young adult section, shares the joy that can come in a faithful partnership with God.

Jim Nix's historical insights of the lives of our own Adventist pioneers is a reminder of the giants of faith that have preceded us as examples of sacrifice. **Mel Rees'** article challenges us with the question, "What is sacrifice?" Biblical insights presented by **Ganoune Diop** in "A Bible Study On Stewardship: Going Beyond the Basics" provides a helpful biblical foundation. **Erika Puni's** *Concept* article gets to the heart of our giving. "It's About Knowing God." There is much to think about here in an age bent on getting more!

Blessings.

Editor

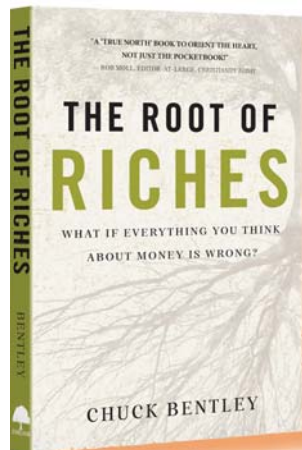
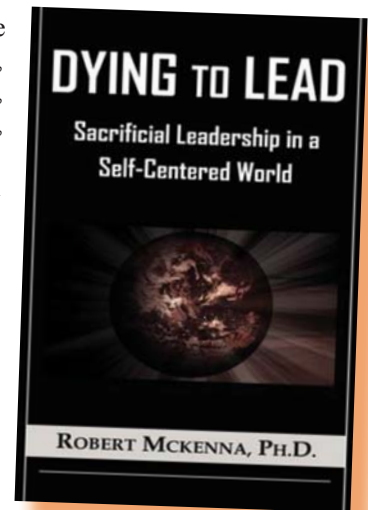


Larry R. Evans,
Associate Director
General Conference
Stewardship Ministries

resources

Whether you are a manager, a president, or a parent, this book will help you reframe your thinking about leadership and what it means to be responsible for the growth, direction, and work of others. Dr. Rob McKenna highlights the realities of leading others, and offers meaningful questions and advice for becoming the leader you would like to be, as well as the kind of leader you would follow. *Dying to Lead: Sacrificial Leadership in a Self-Centered World* is approachable and practical, with short chapters and reflection questions. It is humorous at times, full of practical advice, and loaded with important questions that will get you thinking more deeply about your journey as a leader and as a person. Used by Permission.

Dying to Lead: Sacrificial Leadership in a Self-Centered World
by Robert McKenna
2008: Xulon Press, Longwood, Florida
<http://realtimedevdevelopmentstrategies.com/publications/dying-to-lead/>

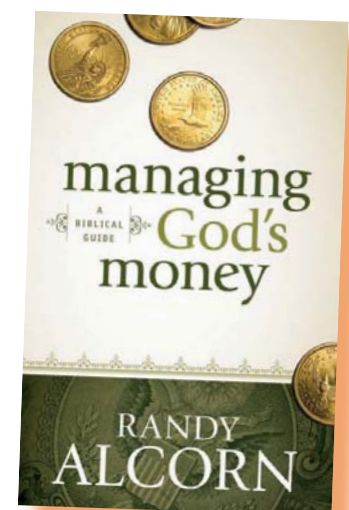


March of 2000, Chuck Bentley standing on the threshold of achieving his lifelong dream—becoming extremely wealthy. He was already worth \$1.7 million on paper, and that sum could only skyrocket as his Dot.com startup neared its initial public offering. That's when the Internet bubble burst and he “lost it all.” In *The Root of Riches*, Bentley recounts his ensuing gut-wrenching journey towards grasping the nature of true riches. Most of us believe that the more we have, the richer we become. It's as accepted as the law of gravity. That's a mistake, Chuck Bentley says, as he leads us from a twisted world-view that sees money as the key to happiness, to God's definition of riches. Bentley offers three "non-negotiables" that are practical, prophetic in nature and personal, for times of prosperity or financial crisis, and relevant to leaders as much as to the member in the pew. Chuck Bentley is a graduate of Baylor University and CEO of Crown Financial Ministries, the world's largest ministry teaching biblical financial principles. Bentley and his wife, Ann, live in Gainesville, Georgia and have 4 sons. Used by Permission.

The Root of Riches: What If Everything You Think About Money Is Wrong?
by Chuck Bentley
2011: Crown Financial Ministries, Lawrenceville, Georgia, www.crown.org

The book, *Managing God's Money*, deals with the whole spectrum of Christian stewardship, and addresses issues like insurance and inheritance, gambling, saving, investing, giving and debt. In a simple, easy-to-follow format, Randy Alcorn addresses from a biblical perspective how we should handle the money and possessions God owns and entrusts to our management. The book stresses it is critical that a proper foundation be laid for good financial planning, making a clear distinction between a simple lifestyle and a strategic one. Alcorn builds on the foundation that nothing we have is ours. Our money is really God's money. Filled with helpful Scripture, *Managing God's Money* is the helpful resource for anyone interested in gaining a solid biblical understanding of financial stewardship. Used by Permission.

Managing God's Money: A Biblical Guide
by Randy Alcorn
2007: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois, www.tyndale.com



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It's About Knowing God



Erika F. Puni, Director
General Conference Stewardship
Ministries

While attending the June, 2011, stewardship advisory in the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division in Pretoria, South Africa, I was reminded of the sacrifice and commitment made by church workers in Zimbabwe in 2008. For a twelve-month period, the Zimbabwe Union Conference was unable to remunerate them for their services because of the impact of inflation on the Zimbabwean economy and the value of the Zimbabwean dollar at the time.

With this one example of faithfulness to God in mind, I've asked myself this question: "What makes people, like these workers, commit themselves to the cause of God in the face of financial hardship and personal loss?" A selected study on the life of Abraham from the Old Testament may help us gain insight into the dynamics of such deep commitment and personal sacrifice by many Seventh-day Adventists around the world today.

Giving Up Isaac

Genesis chapter twenty-two starts with the interesting notation that, "*God tested Abraham*" (verse 1). This introduction shows that the giving of Isaac as a "sacrifice" was a response to something initiated by God. God wanted to test Abraham's "faith"—his character and behavior—within the context of their relationship. Of this test the author of Hebrews testified, "*By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son.*" Hebrews 11:17 (NIV).

The Genesis and Hebrew accounts of this story seem to imply that the testing of one's faith is a necessary challenge and process in one's relationship with God. Writing to the first century Christians on the subject of trials and the testing of one's faith, James made this assertion. "*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*" James 1:2-4 (NIV).

Abraham's Spirit of Sacrifice

One other observation that is worth noting with regards to Abraham's spirit of sacrifice as illustrated in this moving story of faith, was the fact that he was obedient to God even to the point of losing his "only son," the most precious and invaluable possession he had received from God. This unbelievable demand from God, and Abraham's incredible response can only be understood and appreciated fully when placed within the larger context of his life—a man who had waited for many years to see the fulfillment of God's promise of a descendant that was to come from his own body and to become a blessing for the whole world; but now he had to give it back fully as a sacrifice!

This incident in Abraham's life is a powerful illustration of stewardship coming full circle. That Abraham, in placing his son Isaac on the altar as a sacrifice, was simply returning to God His gift. God is the rightful Owner and Original Giver of Isaac, Abraham's son. This act of sacrificial giving would suggest to me that when God calls for a sacrifice from us, His people, He will not settle for anything less but our very best. He wants that thing which is very close to our hearts. Stewardship is about giving our all.

Trusting in the Ultimate Giver and Provider

Another overriding and fundamental principle in this Bible example of sacrifice and commitment is the truth that God is our Provider; and that He will always

deliver even if we can't see the end from the beginning. This kind of trust—in a believable end in the absence of any physical evidence—is still difficult, and so when Isaac posed an innocent but rational question from his position as a “son” and partner in this whole faith testing experience with God, it must have crushed Abraham’s heart. “The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Genesis 22:7 (NIV) From his vantage point as a father and a human being, Abraham could only see Isaac; he was the offering “lamb.” And yet from his heart of hearts, he believed God. And so in spite of his agonizing and aching heart, Abraham never wavered in his response, “*God Himself will provide*” Genesis 22:7, 8 (NIV). Stewardship is about absolute trust in God.

How shall we answer the following question: “What made Abraham do what he did when he placed Isaac on the altar as a sacrifice to God?” I believe the answer has to do with Abraham’s intimate relationship with God. He knew Him as a personal friend, and the giving of Isaac as a sacrifice was a physical expression of a deep and close relationship with God. Paul, the apostle, puts it this way; “*He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.*” Galatians 3:6 (NIV).

Abraham may not have seen the end from the beginning, but he knew God and he trusted Him.

For Seventh-day Adventist Christians in Zimbabwe; for the early pioneers of our faith—people like James and Ellen White and John Andrews; for Abraham of the Bible, and most believers around the world; their motive for giving their all and sacrificing much for the mission of God in this world, is rooted in their personal relationship with Him. They know God as the Owner, the Ultimate Giver, and Provider of life. For them, commitment and sacrifice is a normal way of living.

stewardship window

news from the
director's desk ...

World Stewardship Advisories

Stewardship advisories are special times and events for stewardship leaders and specialists from around the world to meet together for setting the agenda for the Stewardship Ministries of the church at the beginning of every quinquennium.

For this five-year period (2010-2015), division stewardship directors and the General Conference (GC) stewardship team met together at the world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, in March, 2011, for a week of sharing, orientation, reporting, networking, planning, and team building. Following this GC advisory, eight world divisions (the EUD, IAD, SSD, NSD, ECD, SID, SAD, and SUD) have held their advisories. The remaining divisions (the NAD, WAD, TED, ESD, and SPD) will hold their advisories within the first six months of 2012.



Division Stewardship Directors at the 2011 World Stewardship Ministries Advisory

Welcome New Assistant Director



Penny Brink

Penny Brink joined the department in May 2011 as the Assistant Director. Her work for the department will include developing resources and on-line-ministries, assisting the editor of the *Dynamic Steward*, and public relations related work.

Penny is a trained pastor who has been working in the media ministry over the last 7 years in the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division. Penny has served in pastoral ministry, mission work in South Korea, Dean of Women at Helderberg College, Television Production for the Hope Channel, and New Media Evangelism Training co-ordination.

She is proudly South African and an alumnus of Helderberg College where she did a B.A. in Theology (Andrews University). Penny's husband, Andre, was elected as Associate Communication Director for the General Conference in July 2010.

The Spirit of Sacrifice and Commitment



James R. Nix

Director: White Estate
General Conference Headquarters
Silver Spring, Maryland

Following is an interview with James R. Nix, director, of the Ellen G. White Estate, General Conference World Headquarters, and Larry Evans, associate director and editor of the *Dynamic Steward* along with Erika Puni, director of Stewardship Ministries.

DS: Jim, you edited the book, *The Spirit of Sacrifice and Commitment*. Plans are underway for it to be reprinted. What prompted you to write this book in the first place?

JN: Since I was a college student, I have been collecting stories about the sacrifice and commitment of our Adventist pioneers. However, the idea of the book actually came from Ed Reid, former stewardship director of the North American Division.

Ed asked me to speak at a stewardship seminar and to share stories about the sacrifice of our Adventist pioneers. As a follow-up to that seminar, he asked me to write a book on what I had shared. So, I agreed to compile a list of stories from the original sources.

DS: We often refer to these pioneers as “our forebearers.” That sounds like they must have been pretty old. Were they elderly?

JN: Some were older people, but most of them were young people. Uriah Smith recalls the time when he and some other youth bought their first hand press. Girls in their teens and 20s stitched the early pamphlets together by hand. Though their fingers blistered in the process, they believed in what they were doing. They were passionate about this truth. They were teens and young adults getting our message out.

DS: What motivated them?

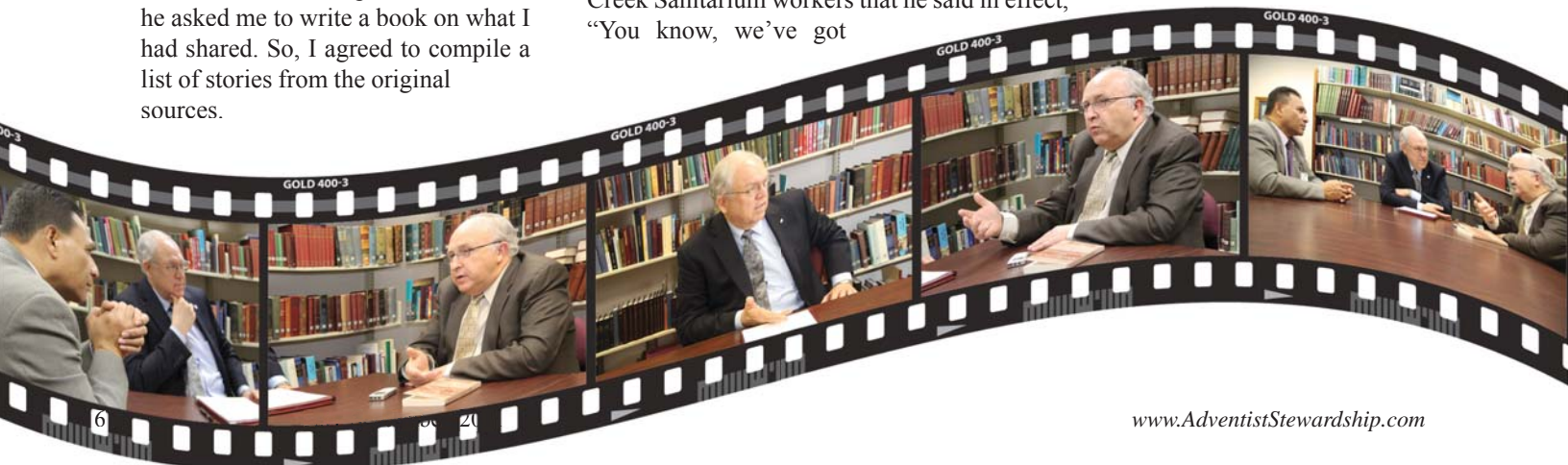
JN: Jesus was coming and people needed to know! I think that was the driving force. They believed passionately that Jesus is coming. There was this passion that people needed to know. William Miller had it when he was a Millerite Adventist. Everyone with whom he came in contact was a potential candidate for heaven. And this is how the pioneers both young and old thought: “Get the message out!” They really did believe they were fulfilling Bible prophecy. Therefore, it was a privilege. It was exciting! They could go to the book of Revelation, and from their understanding of the book they could say, “Here we are.”

DS: This must have taken some sacrifice on their part. What kind of sacrifice are we talking about? Did it alter their careers?

JN: Uriah Smith and his sister Annie Smith each had a teaching contract and they both gave up their contracts. Instead of teaching they went to help James White publish our fledgling little paper called *The Review and Herald*. J. N. Andrews thought about going into law. His uncle, a congressman, who was not a Sabbath-keeper or an Adventist wanted John to take up law. G. I. Butler’s grandfather was the governor of Vermont and no doubt he and the family had great expectations for young George. J. H. Waggoner was a newspaper editor. These individuals along with others gave up significant opportunities and positions to take this relatively unpopular message to share it with the world.

DS: It sounds like sacrifice and commitment were often a family thing.

JN: Often it was. Esther Edson, Hiram Edson’s wife, for instance sold her silverware back when silverware was silver. She did it so they could print the *DayStar Extra*, which is where our sanctuary doctrine was first published. So yes, families—husbands, wives, and children—all participated together. There also are stories about students who would go on diets in response to appeals for mission work. Kellogg even referred to what he called the Indian diet as a means of providing funds for mission work. I believe it was when he went to the Battle Creek Sanitarium workers that he said in effect, “You know, we’ve got



these people that are having famine in India, and if we could just live off of what we can grow in our sanitarium gardens and don't buy anything extra, we can contribute the money we save to the work in India." And many of his workers agreed with him.

DS: Did some lose family members when in mission service?

JN: Yes, but not only did they lose family members—some lost their own lives in mission service. And one of their concerns was, "Don't let my death prevent the work from going on." We especially find this among the missionaries in Africa, because several of the early missionaries died of malaria or other diseases. For that reason, the word would be sent back, "Tell them, my grave marks the trail into Africa. Don't let my passing keep people from coming. Send more missionaries!" It's incredible. I don't know how anybody can really read about the lives of these people, their commitment to improving people's health—getting the message out and especially telling about Jesus' coming without being moved. It speaks to me today.

DS: This raises another question. Did their sacrifices really pay off? Did the church prosper?

JN: We started out on October 23, or a few weeks after the disappointment in 1844. Historians say there may have been 35 to 50 people in this group at the beginning and now there are about 17 million baptized members around the world. So yes, if you look at the church numerically the sacrifice of the pioneers did payoff. However, there is more to it than numbers. If you look at what Adventists have contributed to the health of the world, how much people's diets have changed because of what our pioneers shared about maintaining healthy minds and bodies, clean living and overall cleanliness, the impact is staggering.

DS: In the face of all this, did they face ridicule?

JN: I remember hearing a tape recording of F. D. Nichol. He was talking about a time when he was a young man around 1900 or so. He explained that Adventists were referred to as "grass eaters" because of being vegetarians. P. T. Magan's father sent him to work on a farm in America to get him toughened up as a man. The father owned land in Ireland, but when his son accepted the new-fangled, crazy Sabbath thing, he disowned his son and wrote his son completely out of his estate. So, yes, there was resistance and ridicule. In some parts of the world it is still true, but at least in the United States today much more respect is shown for what Adventists have contributed.

DS: Did our pioneers ever go into personal debt in order to get the message out?

JN: Ellen White borrowed money so that she could contribute to special needs. We have records that she paid as much as 8 percent interest just so she could have money to give to start a school or a sanitarium or a church. Sometimes it was 6 percent. My understanding is that others also were willing to pay interest on borrowed funds to be able to have money to give.

DS: That was commitment! In your study, did you discover that these men and women differentiated between their commitment to God and their commitment to the church?

JN: I think for them it was one and the same. God called this church. They saw it as a prophetic movement called into existence at a precise time in history to do a precise work before Jesus returns. It was His church. For them, I don't think they would say, "Well, that's God, and that's the church."

DS: From your perspective, why is it important that these stories be retold in this century?

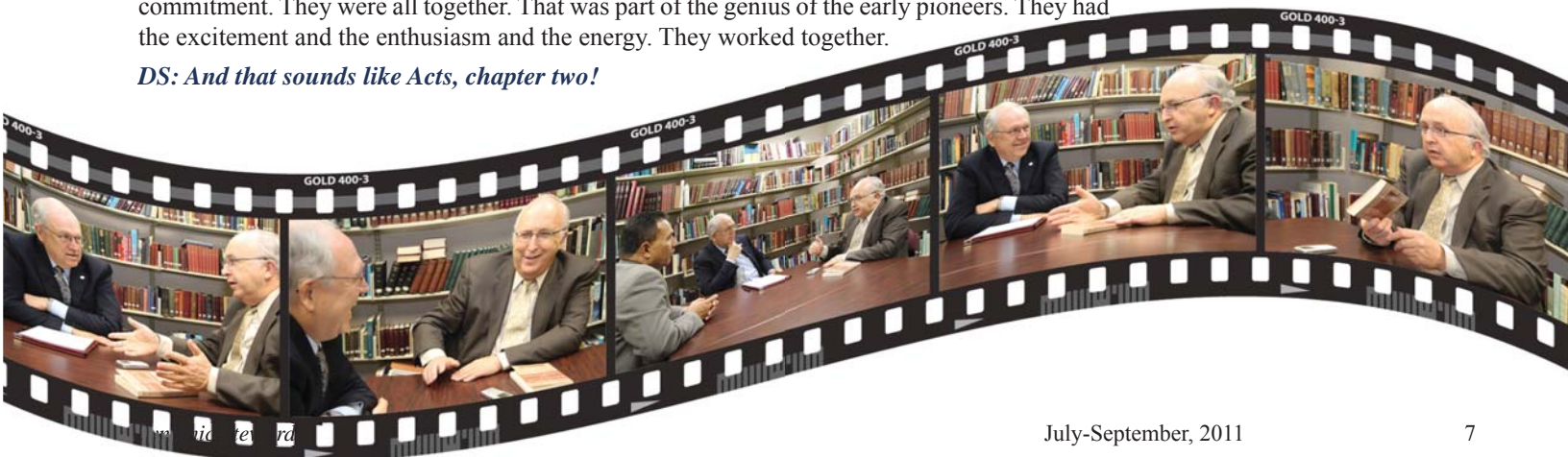
JN: While reflecting on these stories I have been impressed that we all need to remember where we came from, why we are here, and the sacrifice and commitment of the people who started this church—men and women, boys and girls, young and old.

If I can realize that God started this church through them and their victories, then I can be assured He has given me the same promises for that kind of victory to finish the work that they started. However, I must have that same kind of faith and commitment. They were all together. That was part of the genius of the early pioneers. They had the excitement and the enthusiasm and the energy. They worked together.

DS: And that sounds like Acts, chapter two!



L-R: L. Evans, E. Puni, J. Nix in front of The Christ of the Narrow Way Mural in the White Estate.



What Is Sacrifice?

This sermon is reprinted with permission from "Biblical Principles for Giving and Living" published in 1995 by The Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland, 20904; 301-680-6502; www.ministerialassociation.com.

The devil wants everyone who has anything more than his basic needs to feel guilty. This presents a very puzzling problem to the Christian as he attempts to understand the relationship between sacrifice and prosperity. Prosperity must have a high priority among divine gifts.

Solomon: *"Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches and wealth"* (2 Chron. 1: 12).

John: *"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth"* (3 John 2).

A person exercises his God-given talents; God blesses him and he prospers. Then, he is subjected to articles, and sermons on sacrifice—all implying the giving of material things. There are some interesting, sometimes tragic reactions:

1. He gives liberally, but still feels guilty for he has so much left.
2. He rejects all suggestions to giving, for he dreads poverty.
3. He may resent it. One lady, who was approached for financial assistance for church support, said, "If giving to the church means sacrificing all the things I have worked and saved for all my life—or being shaken out—then I'll be shaken out."
4. He may regard the giving of money as a substitute for personal involvement.

By Mel Rees

Ps. 50:5: *"Gather my saints together unto me, those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice."*

The popular thought is that this text refers to material things, and those who sacrifice money, or its equivalent, for God's cause, will be among the throng who await their Lord's return. In other words, their giving of material things will make them eligible. But, does the giving of material things constitute sacrifice?

If this were correct, then a total sacrifice would be the giving of everything a person had, and he would be left destitute. In this condition he would not be able to support himself, his family, nor his church. In fact, he would be totally helpless for he would have nothing with which to do anything productive at all.

Likewise, his testing period would come to an end, for each person has been entrusted with material things, to determine their ability to manage eternal responsibilities.

If sacrifice means the giving of things, then Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Daniel, and many others did not make a covenant with God by sacrifice—for they died very wealthy men. And still, they were accounted worthy of eternal life.

Another concept of sacrifice is "trading." This means that a man could trade earthly things for heavenly. Many false religions are based on this trading, or buying theory. However, this concept has major problems. Consider these texts in relation to this topic:

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Ps. 24:1).

"Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills" (Ps. 50:10).

"The silver and the gold is mine" (Hag. 2:8).

If then, everything on the earth belongs to God, what could a person possibly use for trading material? The first thing a person needs to know, when trading, is if the person with whom he is dealing, owns what is being traded. If he doesn't, then there is a real possibility he will lose everything in the transaction: what he traded, as well as what he received in return.

God certainly isn't going to accept things in trade which He owns in the first place. Hence the premise is wrong.

It should be carefully noted in the text that the key word is not *sacrifice*, but *covenant*. Those will be gathered in that great day who have made a covenant with God—in this instance, by sacrifice. By sacrificing what?

What Is a Covenant?

A covenant is an agreement to do, or not to do a certain thing. It is a contract between two individuals, two groups, or an individual with a group, etc. God made such an agreement with Noah.

"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a token of a covenant between me and the earth ... and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Gen. 9:13-15).

With Abraham:

"And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing" (Gen. 12:2).

Now consider Abraham's predicament:

If God had given Abraham a choice: give Him all his possessions, and keep his son—or—give Him the son, and keep his possessions; there is no question what he would have done. That boy was his greatest possession. Nothing else was of so great value. But ... God didn't give him a choice; He asked for the boy.

After that agonizing trip to Mount Moriah, when Abraham was about to kill his son, God would say, *"Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Gen. 22:12).*

If sacrifice means the giving of material things, Abraham would have had to kill the boy, but God accepted the fact that he was willing—that he obeyed God's instructions, rather than his own desires. This test proved more to Abraham, than it did to God. God already knew Abraham could pass the test—now Abraham knew it. This only proved that Abraham's covenant with God was genuine.

Although God owns the world and everything in it, there is one thing over which He chooses not to exercise control: our hearts—our wills. The power of choice given in the Garden of Eden, and restored by Jesus on the Cross of Calvary, belongs to the individual. A classic example of this occurred during the reign of King David.

He had stained his illustrious career with the foul blot of adultery and murder. The enormity of his crime was pointed out to him by the prophet Nathan. In Psalm 51, David is pouring out his heart to God in confession—seeking relief from his guilt. He pleads with God, *"Have mercy on me, O God; Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin; I acknowledge my transgression; Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."* All these statements show the intensity of his feelings and his desire for forgiveness. Then he recognizes what sacrifice really is.

Psalms 51:16,17: *"For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken spirit and a contrite heart. O God, thou wilt not despise."*

What is a broken spirit? It is the positive response of the human heart to God's instruction and direction.

Wild animals have uncontrolled spirits. Only when this spirit is "broken," can they be made to do the will of man—to be obedient to his direction and command. But, God doesn't "break" our spirits; He pleads, *"My son, give me thine heart" (Prov. 23:26).*

The human heart is like that of the untamed beasts; it is selfish, and self-willed. If left to itself, it will only grow more determined to have its own way.

What Is Sacrifice?

From that illustration, a definition of sacrifice can be made. It is the willingness to relinquish the entire life to God, without any reservations. This means that a covenant relation is entered into by a person with God, in which all of his time, talents, influence, and material goods are under divine direction and control, at all times—under all circumstances.

How is this accomplished? In the common walks of life; in everyday transactions; in the little acts of life—it is dying daily to self. Paul said, *"I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31).* *"I have fought a good fight" (2 Tim. 4:7).* Who was Paul fighting? Enemies, false brethren? All of these, but his greatest battle was with himself. *"For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:19).* This was Paul's constant battle; It is the battle of every human being for as prophet Jeremiah wrote, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately*

wicked; who can know it" (Jer. 17:9).

Consider sacrifice, not as giving, nor trading, but rather as using. This would harmonize with God's plan in the beginning. As agents of heaven, we would be continually receiving God's blessings, and distributing these to others. We would be in constant communication with the Owner. Our instructions would come from:

- His Word
- A knowledge of need
- Divine impressions *"And thine ears shall hear a voice" (Isa. 30:21).*

This knowledge and awareness of our relationship to God would prevent us from having pride of ownership. It would also be a great wall against selfishness. (We would never substitute giving for personal service.) We would never feel guilty about our possessions, for we would be earning, saving, using, and giving under God's direction.

This is true stewardship. The wrongness is not in possessing things, but in claiming ownership and using our resources according to our own selfish interests.

While some might think that money can buy anything, there is something it cannot buy, nor can it be a substitute for personal services. God isn't interested in our money (He could speak and create mountains of gold); He is interested in us—our hearts—our choice to obey Him.

And this willingness to place our hearts on the altar is the supreme sacrifice which He desires. Once we do this, we will have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice (the only thing over which we have control)—then we can hear the "well done" given to those who recognize their stewardship relation to Him and be a part of that vast throng who await His return.

A Closing Thought

If Jesus could have given things for our salvation, he could have given a universe—but it cost him His life. And that's what it will cost us—our lives—that is all we have to give.

A Steward, a Mission, and a Tree



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Nine hundred people were being baptized, all wading into a leaky make-shift swimming pool in Zambia. One man stood beside the pool, using his cell phone to take pictures of dozens of the candidates. The man is Stain Musungaila, a layman in Livingstone's Falls View Church, and an executive with Sun Hotels, Zambia. Stain, a man whose passion is Jesus, and who is in the process of planting his fourth church.

Why are you taking pictures of so many people?"

"These are people I've studied the Bible with, and I'm taking their pictures so I can remind them of the decision they made for Jesus today!" "Let me tell you how it works," Stain says. "Every morning I wake up at 5:30 a.m. and pray for about 45 minutes. I ask Jesus to direct me to someone I should talk with or something else He wants me to do that day. My *to do list* comes from my prayer."

Have you always been a Christian?

No. My life was the best, but I had never been inside a church. I went to Europe, loved the ships and sailed around the world as a catering boss. I lived to make money, and thought if you didn't have money you were just lazy. In 1981 I returned to Zambia and was in charge of food and beverages for a large chain of 5-star resorts. Just a phone call and everything could be on my plate. Church was only for poor people.

How did God find you?

My wife was born of an Adventist family, but I had nothing to do with God. I would come home drunk, and the security guards would open the gate and find me sleeping in my car. Whenever I would see a Christian I would say, "Get out of my way, you lazy person!" I had a hangover one night and didn't want to drive too far. So I stopped and walked in to an evangelistic meeting that was being held in the hotel. A big choir was singing "There's power in the blood of Jesus!" I had never heard any such thing. Then a doctor spoke about high blood pressure and food. She was talking about MY JOB! What kind of church is this, I thought, that talks about my job? I listened and then went home—but kept quiet about it.

Did your wife notice anything?

She encouraged me. I saw her book about healthy living. I started to read because it was talking about my job. I read that book three times! I asked my wife if the book had something to do with the church she attended sometimes. She said yes, and that sometime she might take me along.

Did you go?

Yes, and the pastor was preaching about me. "Jesus loves *me*" he preached. The pastor was speaking, but Jesus was talking to me like I was the only person there. I joined the baptismal class and stayed there for three and a half years. Remember, I came from nowhere and knew nothing.

What did you learn, and what changed as you began to obey?

I only learned one word: "Obedience." By God's grace I was completely changing, giving up my cigars, my whiskey, everything! But all I learned—the doctrines, the stories, the music—everything was only talking about one thing: obedience. I lost everything except my family, my Bible, and a pair of sandals. I was totally poor!

It sounds like God gave you a few Job years.

Yes. The pastor and elders told me the story of Job and said, "Maybe these things you were accumulating were not in God's favor. Or, maybe God is telling you something." So I asked my wife why this God had brought me poverty. She began to cry and I told her that it seemed that my notion before I became a Christian was true: "Christians are supposed to be poor people!" Now I'd lost everything except my sandals. I deposited my children with friends. Then my friends started to run away from me because I no longer had anything to offer them. It was very hard.

What did you think about during those Job Days?

I remembered how I had treated church people in my old life. When they approached me in my office they would beg for a few Kwacha and I would shout, "Get out you lazy bum!" Now I was in that same position. I could not afford even 100 Kwacha! That's when all the old memories came back. My old friends, the ones who used to drink with me, now ran away. When I called them they would tell me they could help me "next week." But "next week" never came. I had powerful friends: vice-presidents of banks, leaders, politicians, but now their secretaries wouldn't even let me come near them. .

You couldn't pay the rent and your van was broken. Useless.

God spoke to me right then. One night while we were praying as a family, my second-born child drew a small diagram. It was the logo of the Sun Hotel in Livingstone. He wrote my name on top of the diagram and said, "Everything's okay. Daddy is going to get a job at this hotel in Livingstone." I laughed and did not believe it.

You became a taxi driver?

A very bad one! We had been given a terrible, rusty, broken van that would not run at all. My brother offered to repair it, and when it was running, I tried to start a small taxi business—sleeping in the van when I had no lifts. "If you are the real God," I said, "I'm not giving up. You have to demonstrate to me who you are!" That's when the van broke down 70 kilometers from town. I was stuck again. I cried to God about how I couldn't go back to my brother and ask for money. I couldn't go to my family and tell them I was a failure. I called loudly to God for help!

How did God answer your call?

God made me remember some of the trainees I had trained at hotels in Livingstone. Maybe one of them might help me, I thought. So I got to Livingstone and found one of them. My van is broken, I told him. Ah, no problem, he said. "Would you like a cigar?" "No, I don't smoke." "Would you like some whiskey?" "No, I don't drink." "What has happened to you?" "I have stopped everything," I told him. "Everything?" he asked. "Everything." "God bless you," he said. "What do you want?" "My van has a problem," I said. "I will organize a mechanic for you," he answered.

Part of getting your van repaired included an offer of a new job.

Yes. I met an old friend from my catering days who told me he had been looking for me. Another of my old friends wanted to talk. I didn't want to see him, so I didn't go. Not the first day, not the second day, but on the third day I finally decided that maybe I ought to go and see him. "Here," he said as he pushed a paper across the desk. "Here is an application form. Would you please put your name there!" "No," I said. "I do not want this kind of job." "Yes," he said. "We want you to take this job." And that is the story of how I got this job as Director of Corporate Services for the Sun Hotels in Zambia. Immediately my life started to improve – and I started looking for a church. Not just any church, I wanted a church that was not under a roof. I had so much knowledge in me that I needed to share, and maybe I could help in a small church under a tree.

A church under a tree?

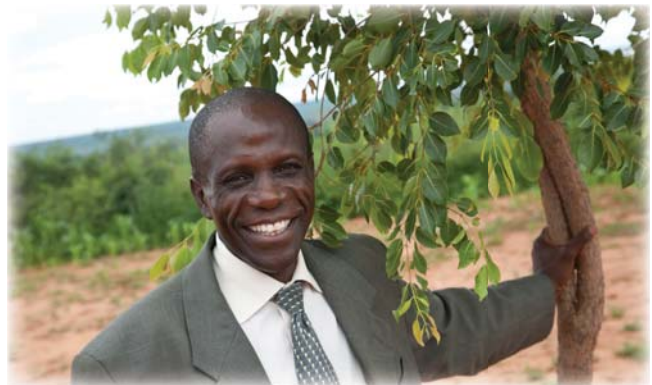
I found one right away in Livingstone. And I called my family and told them all about it.

You still had no money. How did you pay for them to come and join you?

I didn't. God did. They prayed, asking God to provide a way for them to come to Livingstone. Then they tied all their stuff into luggage, and my wife went out and stood by the road, asking for transport. Finally a truck stopped and offered her a lift. "I'll tell you the truth," she said, "I have a family and I have luggage, but I have no money." The driver laughed and asked how much money she *really* had. "Only a few small Kwacha," she answered. "That will be enough," he answered. "At 5 a.m. the next morning I heard a horn outside, dashed out the door and found my family tumbling out of the truck!" The first thing they said was, "Daddy, we want to see the church under the tree!" They didn't care about my job, didn't want to see the hotel, just wanted to see the church under the tree.

You're now beginning your fourth church under a tree. What's next?

As God gives me resources again, those riches are being used only for His work. Look, I have seen all that this world has. Now I only want to get His directions and go where I find souls to be won for Jesus. That excites me! I am going to heaven, what more could I want here?



Stain Musungaila, layman in Livingstone's Falls-View Church and an executive with Sun Hotels.

Sacrificial Living



Jody Fransch
Conference Evangelist
Zimbabwean Union Conference

Jody is a BBA graduate of Helderberg College, South Africa. He is from Zimbabwe and has worked in the Treasury at the Zimbabwean Union Conference for two years. Recently, however, he has felt that he cannot hide from the Lord's calling any longer. The local conference is employing him as a lay evangelist, and he cannot wait to go out there and preach the gospel!



What do you say when the King of the universe who is all powerful, and owns everything on earth, invites you to enter into a life changing relationship with Him. When He says to you, “My child, if you sacrifice your life, I will bless you beyond your wildest dreams,” what do you say?

You say yes!

Most young people I know define stewardship in the narrow sense—from the premise that stewardship just deals with money. Truth be told, in the broad Biblical sense, it's really about a person's relationship with God in every area of life.

What I would like to explore here, is the theory that stewardship is indeed more than tithes and offerings; that stewardship is more than only managing money. When we stop to really think about it, we recognize that God really is owner of everything we often claim as ours.

Yes, we struggle applying this to our daily life, but at least we acknowledge the concept. . . right? We talk about working for God and managing His resources. But as stewards we are more than God's employee—we are partners with Him.

Partners

There are different types of partnership. Normally, partners are two equals who bring something of equal value to the relationship. In some cases, one partner is the investor of money and the other an expert who invests knowledge or know-how.

Sometimes partnership is a reward for a special service or superior performance. Our partnership with God, however, is quite different. After all, what can we bring to this partnership?

God is owner of all. He gives us abilities and talents. He provides all our resources. He gives us our very lives.

We really don't bring anything of our own to this relationship with God; we merely choose to accept the great privilege of partnering with Him except for a submissive heart. God will not force us into this incredible partnership, He merely calls us. What are we going to say?

What We Can Do

In order to help us answer God's call, let's explore the broader sense of biblical stewardship using 4 “T”s.

1. Time

What better way to illustrate the stewardship of time than to go back to the Bible. More specifically, the Ten Commandments. Look at the Fourth Commandment. It deals with the Sabbath. This commandment gives us two tests; first, that we are to work six days and second, that we are to rest on the seventh day. In other words, the religion we profess makes it as much our duty to engage our time in work (paid or not) for six days, as it is to rest and keep the Sabbath holy on the seventh day!

2. Temple

Believe it or not, our health is also an important aspect of stewardship. We

are to balance our lives with regards to labor, rest, recreation, and diet. 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 says: *“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”*

3. Talents

Yes indeed, we have all been blessed with special talents and it is up to us to ask God what they are so we can use them to His honour and glory. When Christ was ascending to heaven the Bible tells us in Acts 4 that He “. . .gave gifts to men.” This tells me it is our responsibility to really bless others with the gifts we have been given. This is the essence of the stewardship of our talents.

4. Treasure

This is the aspect of stewardship that we are most familiar; the stewardship of money. My favorite verse in this regarding is Malachi 3:10:

“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,” says the Lord of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.”

My First Car

I remember that a while back, I really did “try God on this.” I wanted to buy my first car by a certain date. At this point in my life owning my own car was essential. I had just moved back home to Zimbabwe, and had been offered a job as an accountant for the Zimbabwean Union Conference. Public transport was very expensive and unreliable, and owning a car would make the difference between being able to get to work or not.

I was on my own, and had no money of my own. I made a commitment to be faithful in all my tithes and offerings, and prayed that God would bless me as per His promise in Malachi 3:10.

My grandmother could even see how I was struggling, and offered to help me out by lending me her car for a few months! That really put me under pressure to save up. I put God to the test, and to my every need, He was faithful.

I lived on a shoestring budget for about 5 months, making many sacrifices, but God did the rest. He really stretched my savings and came through for me. The result was I got my car with almost a month to spare. On top of that, God brought someone into my life at just that moment—an uncle of mine who reminded me that because I was a recently returning resident, I was eligible for a waiver of import duties on an imported car. This reminder saved me about a third of the total cost of purchasing my car.

I know it was the Lord who guided me through this whole process. I am so grateful for His blessing.

The end of this story is remarkable! I got my car with almost a month to spare, and to top it all, I wasn’t required to pay a cent on the import duties I was expecting to have to pay. This saved almost one third of the total cost of the vehicle. What a blessing!

Yes friends, the very God of the universe calls us to “return” to Him to the relationship for which we were created. When we do this, then every part of life becomes an exciting adventure of walking with God. Try saying, “yes” today. Try applying partnership with Him to each moment and each action in every aspect of your life, and feel His blessing.



Getting Beyond the Basics:



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This study focuses on some of the least discussed aspects of biblical stewardship. In scripture stewardship is associated with several important aspects of the Christian faith: God's sovereignty, grace, God's kingdom, godliness, discipleship and self-sacrifice.

One of the mandates God has given to the Seventh-day Adventist church is to clearly articulate before the world the three angels' messages. Because this message is comprehensive good news called the everlasting gospel, Seventh-day Adventists make a case that they are to be and bring blessings to the world. They share the antidote against the world's sins and sorrows. According to Ellen White, this is the content of the three angels' messages.¹

Adventist identity is grounded on a biblical Christian identity. In the New Covenant, Christians are called stewards of the manifold grace of God. They are also called stewards of the mysteries of God: that is Christ, the gospel and the kingdom. These dimensions of stewardship are worth considering more closely.

Biblical Fundamentals of Stewardship

The following reflections are, therefore, meant to show the biblical foundations of Adventist identity expressed as a concept of stewardship.

Stewardship most certainly refers to the management of God's resources. Many would readily accept that stewardship is a comprehensive management of treasure, time, and talents.

There is, however, a dimension of stewardship that is of an even higher order according to Scripture. The Apostle Paul did make such a case.

A Stewardship of a Higher Order

In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul first of all refers to himself and to Christians as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2: *"This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy."*²

The word he uses in this text is borrowed from maritime language. It is usually translated as "servants" or "slaves" of Christ. Etymologically, it signifies galley slaves, those who row at the lower deck of a ship.

But there is more in the text. Paul calls himself "*oikonomos*" a Greek word that literally means a house manager, or a manager of the resources of a house. Then, the next word Paul uses to specify the content of the resources is significant.

The Christian is called the steward of the mysteries of God. Not just the keeper or the dispenser or proclaimer but stewards of the mysteries of God. That is stewardship of a higher order.

Stewards of Grace and Stewards of Mysteries

The two concepts of grace and mystery are not commonly associated with stewardship. They are however, biblically inseparable from its core content. Contrary to popular intuition or opinion, both signify the need for giving rather than the need for keeping. Grace is to be distributed. Mysteries are revealed as gifts whether it be the mystery of the gospel, the mystery of God, or the mystery of godliness. Even the mystery of the beast is revealed to God's end-time people so that they be not deceived or distracted. This revelation is actually purposed to encourage God's end-time people to persevere even under severe persecution during times of tribulation.

Stewards of the Grace of God

The Apostle Peter shows the depth of the concept of grace:

1 Peter 4:7-11: *"The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."*³

Grace is a multifaceted and comprehensive concept that signifies the various benefits of the good news of God. It designates God's full blessing to His people. It includes forgiveness of sins but much more. Grace is actually a person, the incarnate Word, the One who is full of grace and truth, and from whom we receive grace after grace (John 1:15-16).

Stewards of the Mystery of Godliness: Jesus Christ

1 Timothy 3:1-3: *Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory."*⁴

The mystery of godliness is a person, the incarnate Son of God Jesus Christ. The blessing of Christ of which Adventist Christians are stewards is the revelation of his person, his life and the salvation He brings.

Ellen White while recognizing the mission of other genuine Christians who share Jesus Christ, says:

"Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. The proclamation of the third angel's message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath truth. This truth, with others included in the message, is to be proclaimed; but the great center of attraction, Christ Jesus, must not be left out. It is at the cross of Christ that mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. The sinner must be led to look to Calvary; with the simple faith of a little child he must trust in the merits of the Savior, accepting His righteousness, believing in His mercy" (GW 156.2).

Stewardship then is inseparable from mission. In other words, followers of Jesus Christ are stewards of the mystery of the Gospel who is Jesus Christ himself. God is the good news.

Stewards of the Mystery of the Gospel

A text that has been instrumental to shape Adventist understanding of mission is Revelation 10. The Apostle John is told that the mystery of God must be fulfilled at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Meanwhile, he is given the mandate to prophesy. Adventists as a prophetic people participate in the proclamation of the mystery of God until it is fulfilled when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of God and of His Christ as stated in Revelation 11:15.

Every member of God's end time people is a steward of the mystery of the gospel, a missionary and an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Only a life completely dedicated to the glory of God, a sacrificial living in service to others is fitting for such a calling.

Stewards of the Mystery of the Common Inheritance of Jews and Non-Jews

Another fascinating aspect of the mystery of God is God's determination to bless all the families of the earth. This truth is entrusted to God's stewards, his ministers.

In a text where Paul talks about being the steward of the grace of God, he specifies that the mystery, hidden for ages in God, is that *"the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel"* (Ephesians 3:6).

In this text Paul explains that the stewardship of the grace of God is connected to the mystery of God revealed to him and to apostles and prophets. This mystery is also connected to the gospel in terms of salvation, adoption, and inheritance. God's wisdom is manifested as the church, and in particular, the true followers of Christ, remain faithful stewards.

Stewards of the Mystery of the Kingdom

A major development of the concept of stewardship in the New Covenant is its connection to the kingdom of God and discipleship. Attested in Matthew, Mark, and

Luke, Jesus spoke about the mystery of the kingdom that is only revealed to His disciples, not outsiders, to whom God's speech came as parables.

The readers of the gospels have to keep in mind that true disciples, according to Jesus, are those who do three things: deny themselves, take their cross, and follow Jesus. A good summary of what this means is encapsulated in the Latin word *sacrificare*, germane to the English word sacrifice: Literally, it means, "to make sacred." Disciples are sacred people or saints, completely dedicated to Christ's person and agenda, with no life of their own except the life of Christ. Like the 144,000 in Revelation 14, they follow Jesus Christ, the Lamb sacrificed but standing, wherever He goes.

Implication: Living Sacrifices

Stewardship and the spirit of sacrifice have their connection in discipleship. For a disciple, God is the supreme good, the supreme value, incomparable to any quantifiable resource. He is supreme.

Ultimately, a steward manages God's goods, for all things belong to God; however, the mystery or secret of stewardship is to let God be God, and let God manage our lives. He is the owner of our lives. He alone is Lord. His knowledge is entrusted to His people, who as good stewards, share the good news of God, the mystery of His person, His acts of judgment and grace, His Kingdom, and His righteousness.

A giver, or donor to God's cause does good; however, his or her donation is never complete until they genuinely offer their own selves to God, and offer to be blessings to others as stewards of and vehicles to God's blessings.

¹Manuscript 75, 1906, p. 3.

²The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. 2001 (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

³The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. 2001 (1 Peter 4:7-11). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁴The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. 2001 (1 Timothy 3:1-3). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

The Spirit of Sacrifice & Commitment

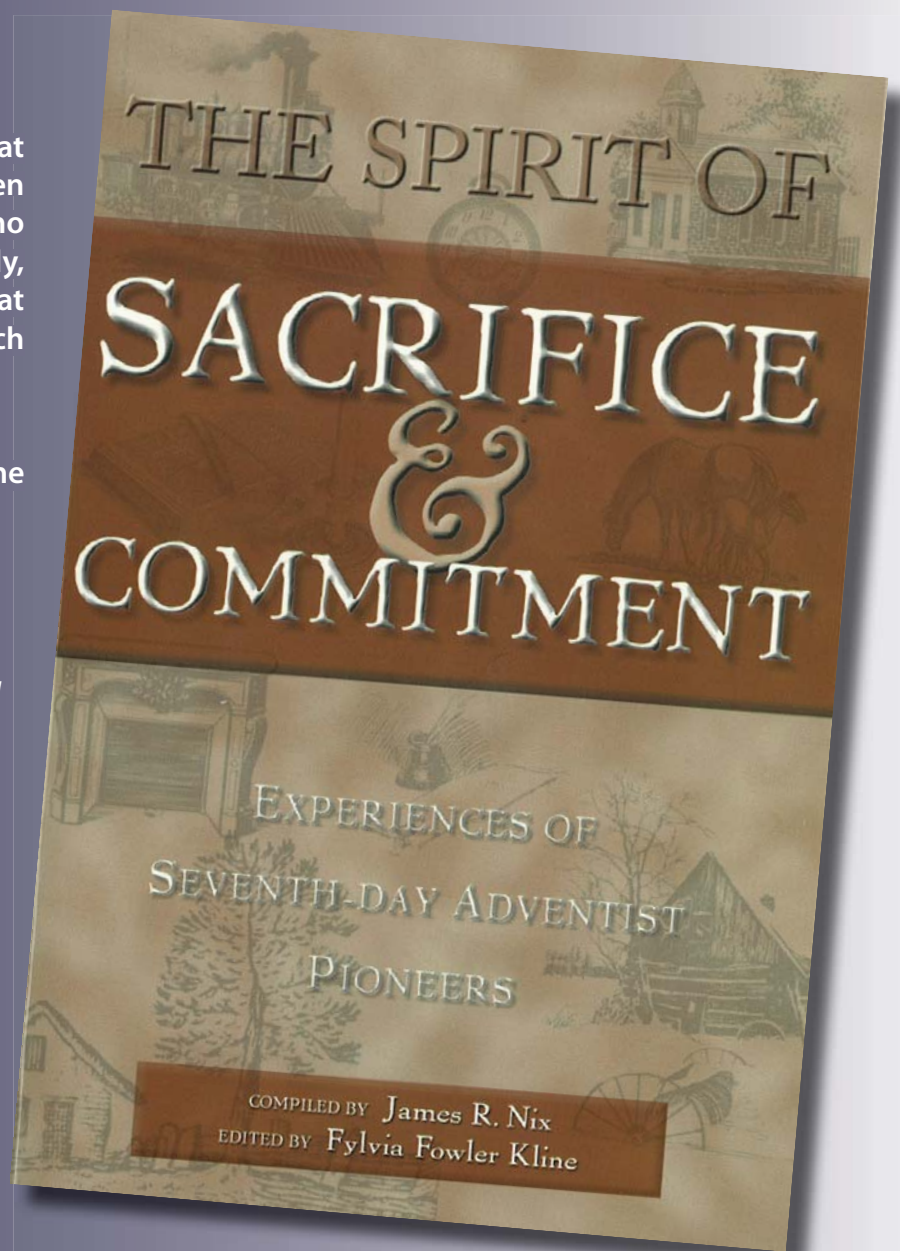
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—Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, p. 196



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